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Agenda item 11 (b)

FURTHER PROMOTION AND ENCOURAGEMENT OF HUMAN RIGHTS AND FUNDAMENTAL FREEDOMS, INCLUDING THE QUESTION OF THE PROGRAMME AND METHODS OF WORK OF THE COMMISSION

NATIONAL INSTITUTIONS FOR THE PROMOTION AND PROTECTION OF HUMAN RIGHTS

Written statement submitted by the Inter-Parliamentary Union, a non-governmental organization in consultative status (Category I)

The Secretary-General has received the following communication which is circulated in accordance with Economic and Social Council resolution 1296 (XLIV).

[30 January 1991]

1. In the context of its human rights programme, the Inter-Parliamentary Union has conducted a survey designed to make an inventory of formal or informal parliamentary bodies for human rights issues as they exist at present in some of the 145 national Parliaments.

2. The survey was carried out following the adoption by the Inter-Parliamentary Council (the plenary governing body of the Organization) in September 1989 of a resolution calling on all Parliaments to establish parliamentary bodies for the promotion and protection of human rights.

3. The resolution also encourages the formation of groups of parliamentarians working in particular for the release of political prisoners and an end to both torture and executions; it stresses that parliamentarians, through greater involvement in human rights issues, could exert pressure on foreign Governments regarding human rights abuses, and could also exert pressure on their own Governments to encourage consistent and impartial action on behalf of the victims of such violations by means of bilateral representations.

4. The results of the survey are included in a World Directory of Parliamentary Human Rights Bodies, which is available upon request. This Directory, which was conceived as a compilation of data and a reference tool on existing parliamentary mechanisms in the human rights field, contains, in the form of dated country sheets, information provided officially by Parliaments and by international parliamentary assemblies and institutions, including the Inter-Parliamentary Union itself, on:

(a) Formal parliamentary bodies (committees, sub-committees and ad hoc committees) which have an explicit mandate to deal with human rights issues or do so occasionally, at the national or international level;

(b) Informal parliamentary bodies (groups of parliamentarians) active in this field.

Whenever no such human rights body existed any comment received in that respect was reproduced.

5. As the survey has led to the establishment of bodies in Parliaments which did not yet have them and the development of those already in existence, the Inter-Parliamentary Union has decided to publish an updated version of the Directory in the next few months.

6. The Directory does not contain an analysis of the situation or trends revealed by the survey. In order to do so, it would be necessary to have information not only on existing parliamentary mechanisms to deal with human rights issues but also on their concrete achievements, and it is on the basis of such a body of data that the Union plans to deepen in the future its reflection on the role of Parliament as the guardian of human rights.